



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148491

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

19–20 November 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

1

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements for the diocesan Bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection have been addressed in full.

What the school does well

- Self-evaluation by the headteacher and religious education lead is highly effective, leading to a culture of continuous improvement.
- Relationships are outstanding in this harmonious school where staff and pupils know they are loved.
- Attainment in religious education is high, with most children reaching the expected standard as set out by the *Religious Education Directory*.
- Teachers are passionate about teaching religious education and have been well supported in adopting the new model curriculum.
- Pupils participate in and respond to prayer and liturgy with great reverence and enthusiasm.

What the school needs to improve

- Map Catholic social teaching across the curriculum so that it is a golden thread helping pupils clearly articulate the theology underpinning their actions.
- Enhance pupil voice and the opportunity to question in religious education through tasks which involve high levels of oracy, for example, drama, debate and group work, with a particular focus on challenging more able pupils.
- Give more pupils in more year groups the opportunity to be involved in whole school liturgical preparation and lead prayer and liturgy outside their own classroom.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

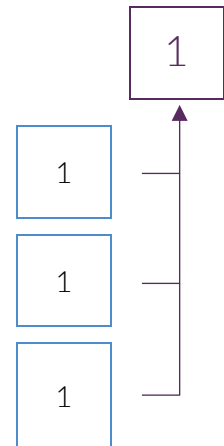
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils at St Joseph's demonstrate a strong sense of belonging and pride in their Catholic identity. They speak with conviction about the distinctive nature of their school, with one pupil commenting, 'It is a lovely Catholic school where you can learn and grow in faith'. This sentiment reflects the positive and nurturing environment that parents also value highly. Pupils make an active and meaningful contribution to the Catholic life and mission of the school. They have developed a secure understanding of Catholic social teaching and are rightly proud of their efforts to support the poor and vulnerable. The school recognises the need to build on this by mapping Catholic social teaching across the curriculum, enabling pupils to articulate more clearly the theological principles underpinning their actions. Commitment to stewardship is evident through the Eco Club, which recently earned the school an Eco Green Flag award. Leadership roles are embraced enthusiastically. The pupil chaplaincy team, appointed through a rigorous application and interview process, is regarded as prestigious and influential. Other pupils speak positively about its impact on prayer and liturgy across the school. Pupil leaders act as excellent role models for younger children, promoting a culture of faith and responsibility.

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of St Joseph's is highly effective. The school's mission statement is clear, well understood, and lived out daily by pupils and staff. Relationships throughout the community are warm and respectful, reflecting the commitment of staff to creating a caring Christian environment where every individual is valued. This is clearly valued by parents, with one writing: 'We are very happy parents and feel that the school is a caring and nurturing environment for our children'. Inclusion is a strength of the school. Pupils of all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, are fully engaged in the Catholic life of the school. They participate enthusiastically in leadership roles and initiatives

promoting the Common Good. Pupils speak confidently about the love and care shown by their teachers, which fosters a deep sense of belonging. Provision for spiritual development is rich and varied. Annual retreats for each year group, held at the local parish centre, provide opportunities for prayer and reflection. The school environment strongly reflects its Catholic identity; recent enhancements include artwork depicting House Saints, Catholic social teaching, and virtues. Prayer tables, beautifully presented, form a focal point in every classroom. The relationships, sex and health education programme is firmly rooted in Catholic teaching, enabling pupils to understand the dignity of every human person.

Leaders and governors at St Joseph's demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the Catholic identity and mission of the school. Their passion for ensuring that this is first and foremost a Catholic school permeates policy, practice and decision-making at every level. This is evident in the strong emphasis placed on Catholic social teaching, exemplified by the introduction of a Racial Justice and Diversity group, which actively involves all stakeholders, including parents. Links with the parish are excellent and highly valued by the school community. Pupils and parents speak appreciatively of the time and pastoral support offered by the local assistant priest, which enriches the spiritual life of the school. Staff feel valued and supported, both by the leadership team and by one another, creating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Self-evaluation is a significant strength; leaders and governors know their school exceptionally well and identify clear, ambitious priorities that drive continuous improvement. Recent appointments of five new staff have been used as an opportunity to refresh understanding of the Catholic life and mission across the school. The headteacher, well established in the school but relatively new to the role, benefits from strong support from the Multi-Academy Trust, ensuring sustained leadership capacity.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

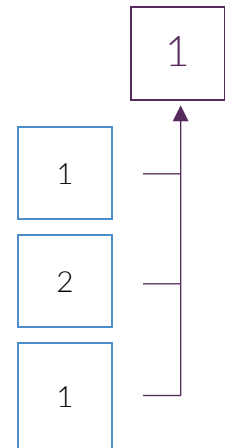
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils at St Joseph’s achieve highly in religious education and demonstrate a genuine enjoyment of their learning. The school’s high expectations ensure that children develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills, fully aligned with the requirements of the *Directory*. The majority of pupils meet expected standards by the end of their time at St Joseph’s, with many working beyond this. This strong attainment has been sustained over several years. Lesson observations revealed pupils confidently recalling prior learning and responding accurately to teachers’ questions. Adaptations for pupils with special educational needs enable them to access lesson content effectively, supporting good progress. Regular opportunities for reflection, such as ‘pause points’, help pupils consider how their learning influences their daily lives. Subject-specific vocabulary is prioritised, allowing pupils to articulate their understanding fluently and confidently. They enjoy their lessons and respond well to questioning, though they would benefit from more opportunities to pose their own questions. During observations, behaviour was exemplary, with pupils showing high levels of concentration and engagement, maximising learning opportunities. The presentation in pupils’ books reflects their respect for the subject and pride in their work.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in religious education is strong. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, enabling them to plan and deliver a well-structured curriculum that meets the requirements of the *Directory*. Teachers new to Catholic education benefit from effective mentoring, being paired with experienced colleagues, which accelerates their understanding of the subject and its distinctive nature. Pupils receive high-quality feedback after every lesson, and their responses show that they are given opportunities to reflect on next steps in their learning. Questioning is consistently effective across the school, promoting engagement and maximising learning opportunities. In some year groups, tasks involving

drama, debate and group discussion were observed, providing rich opportunities for oracy and pupil voice. These approaches deepened understanding and encouraged pupils to ask questions, and the school is committed to embedding these strategies more widely as the new curriculum becomes established. There is evidence that some pupils are beginning to make meaningful links between scripture, the Creed, the sacraments and daily life. Leaders recognise that strengthening this aspect will enable more pupils to exceed curriculum expectations and develop a deeper understanding of their faith.

Leaders and governors at St Joseph's are committed to promoting, monitoring and evaluating religious education. The subject leader's clear vision for religious education is a notable strength and ensures that the subject is given core parity with other areas of the curriculum. This is evident in the quality and quantity of pupils' work, the high standard of feedback provided, and the allocation of resources, including a dedicated budget. Professional development for staff is prioritised, with regular training opportunities offered. The leadership team has used the recent influx of new teachers as an opportunity to refresh and strengthen the skills and knowledge of all staff. Teachers speak about feeling well supported in their delivery of the RE curriculum, which contributes to the consistency and quality of provision. Staff appreciate the open-door policy of leaders in order to discuss lessons and ensure teachers are confident in delivering the planned curriculum. Governors play an active role in monitoring the subject. The subject leader presents annually to the governors' education committee, and governors engage directly with pupils to validate the information they receive. Assessment data is analysed effectively to ensure that expectations in RE remain as high as in other core subjects. This rigorous approach to evaluation reflects the school's commitment to maintaining high standards in religious education.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

Pupils at St Joseph's participate in and respond to prayer and liturgy with great reverence and enthusiasm. They demonstrate a deep respect for the opportunities provided for prayer and liturgy, understanding how to greet the Gospel, observe sacred silence, and engage in both traditional and spontaneous prayer. This reflects the school's strong commitment to nurturing pupils' spiritual development. Prayer and liturgy are carefully planned in line with the liturgical cycle, ensuring that experiences are meaningful and relevant. Pupils are given regular opportunities to plan and lead liturgies, and when they do so, they approach this responsibility with great maturity. As a result, they are developing an excellent understanding of the elements of high-quality prayer and liturgy. Pupils in the chaplaincy team, who have been selected from Year 6, talked about themselves as role models: leading prayer and liturgy across the school, modelling excellence and inspiring others. Leaders recognise the need to extend these opportunities further, enabling more pupils from different year groups to contribute to whole-school liturgical preparation and to lead prayer and worship beyond their own classrooms. Pupils speak positively about their prayer life and articulate how it helps them to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, demonstrating a clear understanding of the purpose and value of collective worship in their daily lives.

The quality of collective worship at St Joseph's is highly effective and central to the life of the school. Pupils experience a rich and varied programme of prayer and liturgy, both in class and as a whole school. Weekly class liturgies are thoughtfully linked to the Sunday's gospel, ensuring that scripture remains at the heart of worship. Pupils demonstrate reverence and understanding, including how to greet the Gospel appropriately. A balance of traditional and contemporary prayers and hymns enhances the prayer life of the school, fostering engagement and inclusivity. All staff are committed to leading and continually improving the quality of prayer

and liturgy within their classrooms. This was evident during the inspection, where numerous class liturgies were observed featuring high-quality art, music, and symbols that enriched the experience and deepened pupils' spiritual reflection. Parents value the opportunities to participate in worship, as confirmed by survey responses indicating they are regularly invited into school for prayer and liturgical celebrations. This partnership strengthens the home-school-parish relationship and reinforces the Catholic identity of the community. Collective worship at St Joseph's is creative, inclusive, and deeply rooted in scripture, enabling pupils to develop a mature understanding of prayer and its significance in their lives.

Leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate collective worship with great effectiveness. Prayer and liturgy are carefully planned, supported by clear documentation that enables staff to lead worship confidently. The leadership team has established precise expectations for the prayers pupils should know and experience before leaving the school, ensuring progression and depth in their spiritual formation. Mass is celebrated in school at least termly and on holy days of obligation, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during Advent and Lent, providing pupils with rich opportunities for sacramental life. Leaders are committed to ongoing professional development in this area, including innovative approaches such as liturgy triads, where teachers observe and learn from one another to enhance practice. Prayer and liturgy are well resourced, and governors prioritise funding to maintain high standards. Leaders are approachable and proactive in supporting staff with planning and delivery, fostering confidence and creativity. Performance management targets for all teachers include Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education, reinforcing its centrality. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and regular, using observations and pupil voice to inform improvement. This systematic approach ensures that collective worship remains vibrant, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148491
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9193318
Full postal address of the school	Great Hadham Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 2NL
School phone number	01279652576
Headteacher	Ann Cassidy-Jones
Chair of governors	Vedran Biondic
School Website	http://www.stjosephs207.herts.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	13 February 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Mark Holdsworth	Lead
Susan Grace	Team
Katie Linnane	Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement